

# A LETTER

*To a Person of QUALITY, in Relation to the Affirmation  
of the QUAKERS.*

SIR,

**I** Am afraid you are a little too Partial, when you think what you told me made some Impression upon you; who have so long Honour'd me with your Friendship, will be as well receiv'd by those who know not who I am.

However, since I have your Command for so doing, I will set down in Writing, and send to the Press, something of what pass'd between us.

You was so Indulgent, as easily to allow that it was a great Mistake in those who wished well to the *Protestant Episcopal* CHURCH of ENGLAND, to put off so long Granting Liberty of Conscience, by Act of PARLIAMENT.

And you agreed with me, that had it been Granted the next Session after King *Charles* the Second was Possess'd of His Throne, it is very probable that the other *Sectaries* would not have so closely United with the *Presbyterians*, who had so lately shewn themselves so averse to, and had Preached and Printed so vehemently against any *Toleration*.

And that this Procrastination of what was (by reason of that Deluge of Sects that overflowed this Island during the Civil Wars, and Usurpation of *Cromwell*) become as well a Necessary as Healing Measure, was certainly but a *meer* Political Mistake, must be allow'd to be pretty Evident, from the Preamble of the BILL to prevent **Occasional Conformity**: For that Preamble, in so many words asserts that *nothing is more contrary to the Profession of the Christian Religion, and particularly to the Doctrine of the CHURCH of ENGLAND, than Persecution for Conscience sake only.*

And that Preamble must doubtless be the Sense of the Truest Sons of the CHURCH of ENGLAND, and must be allow'd to be the declar'd Sense of both Houses; for it was in the BILL, when the *Occasional Bill* was brought into the HOUSE of COMMONS, and it stood unalter'd, in the HOUSE of LORDS; (where our Most Reverend, and Right Reverend Fathers in God, the Archbishops, and Bishops, were most of them present) when they had made all their Amendments to the said BILL.

But to hasten to what was the Occasion of our Discourse; the Altering the *Affirmation* of the People called QUAKERS, whose Printed CASE, in Relation to that Matter you shewed me; with an intimation that you would be glad to know what I thought should be done in it.

I shewed you, that in an Excellent Sermon Archbishop Tillotson Preach'd at the Assizes held at Kingston in Surrey, concerning *The Lawfulness and Obligation of Oaths*; before that he deliver'd his Sounder and more Rational Explication of those words, *Matth. v. ver. 33, 34, &c. Ye have heard that it hath been said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thy self, But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by Heaven, &c. but let your Communication be Yea, Yea, and Nay, Nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of Evil.*  
That



That Learned Archbishop saith; *He readily grants that there is scarce any Error whatsoever that hath a more plausible Colour from Scripture, than theirs, who Scruple Swearing at all.*

Now if it hath such a *Plausible Colour* from Scripture, *since Toleration is Confirm'd by a Law of this very Session*; I can't but think that the PARLIAMENT will, upon Application, make the most Scrupulous of the QUAKERS easie in the Matter of the Affirmation. I say the most Scrupulous easie; for tho' many of the QUAKERS can, and do, take the present Affirmation, I hear divers of those who take it, had rather it had been worded otherwise; and it seems to me to be a sort of Persecution for Conscience sake only, to continue even upon those QUAKERS an Affirmation, that they can but just swallow down, and digest.

With great Submission, I think that *nothing is more contrary to the Profession of the Christian Religion*, than Temporally to hurt any Man for his Religious Scruples, if the Publick and Private Interests of his Fellow-Subjects can be otherwise rendred Safe.

Now I think the QUAKERS, in the Printed CASE you shewed me, make a pretty fair Offer: They say they will be content to undergo as great Penalties as are inflicted in Cases of Perjury, if they falsifie their Word. I say this is a pretty fair Offer. But I, (who think they ought, both from the Principles of our Excellent CHURCH, and out of Regard to our selves, to have the Ease they themselves desire) think they ought to undergo greater Penalties than are inflicted in Cases of Perjury, for *Falsifying their Words*; and that because when any Man obtains an Indulgence, by pretending Scruples, and afterwards makes an ill Use of that very Indulgence, he seems to me to be a Villain of a larger Size than ordinary, and to deserve a more than ordinary Punishment.

But I come to another part of their Printed CASE, which I touched upon just now; and I must own that it appears to me for the Benefit of their Fellow Subjects to Alter the Affirmation just as the most Scrupulous QUAKERS would have it; for we generally choose for Servants, Sober Persons, and those Servants are often Witnesses to our Writings. Now Sober Men are, or are likely to become Religious; those who are Religious, sometimes, through an Excess, become *Enthusiasts*; and then it is not impossible but that they may Embrace the Opinions of the QUAKERS; and even of those of that Sect too who are most Scrupulous. And pray, if all this should happen, might not such a Servant's turning QUAKER, if the Affirmation is not Alter'd, prove of infinite Ill Consequence to his Master, who perhaps Hired him at first, chiefly because he was a Sober Consciencious Man? To tell you the Truth, I am Inform'd there are some Instances of this Nature.

I hope I have Recollected enough of what we Talked over; and my Publishing such accidental Conversation, if it proves of any Use, is owing to you; who I confess can make me do as much as one Friend can in Reason desire of another. I am,

Your Humble Servant,

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